

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /067 W

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R 270600Z NOV 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4251

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0981

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ET

SUBJECT: ASMARA BEGINS KEBELE ELECTION PROCESS

1. ON SUNDAY, NOV 21, RESIDENTS OF ASMARA'S 107 KEBELES BEGAN THE PROCESS OF ELECTIONS FOR KEBELE COUNCILS; A PROCESS WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY RESULT IN THE ELECTION OF A MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND FINALLY A MAYOR OF ASMARA. THE FIRST MEETING WAS HELD TO SELECT FIVE MEMBERS IN EACH KEBELE TO ACT AS AN "ELECTORAL COLLEGE" FOR THE SELECTION OF 40 CANDIDATES FOR THE ACTUAL KEBELE COUNCIL. THE FIVE WERE SELECTED BY VOICE VOTE FROM A SLATE OF 10 KEBELE RESIDENTS.

2. THE 40 CANDIDATES FOR THE KEBELE COUNCIL WILL BE CAREFULLY SELECTED BY THE ELECTORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH 10 STRINGENT PROVISIONS ESTABLISHED BY THE EPMG. THESE PROVISIONS PRECLUDE CERTAIN RESIDENTS, E. G. LANDLORDS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO EARN MORE THAN  
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ET\$50 RENT PER MONTH; WHILE ALSO REQUIRING THAT THEY MEET

SPECIFIC (?) QUALIFICATIONS, E.G. CANDIDATES MUST DEMONSTRATE A "PROPER REVOLUTIONARY ATTITUDE". FROM THIS SLATE OF 40, WHICH WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE KEBELE RESIDENTS ON NOV 28, FROM 15 TO 17 KEBELE REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE CHOSEN BY EACH KEBELE IN ELECTIONS ON DEC 3. REGISTRATION FOR THAT ELECTION IS UNDERWAY NOW, AND REGISTRANTS MUST ALSO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN THE 10 EPMG PROVISIONS, OR BE DISENFRANCHISED.

3. ONCE THE KEBELE COUNCILS HAVE BEEN ELECTED, THEY WILL CHOOSE TWO MEMBERS FROM EACH COUNCIL TO FORM A CONGRESS WHICH WILL ELECT A 20 TO 25-MEMBER MUNICIPAL COUNCIL. EVENTUALLY THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL WILL PUT FORWARD THREE OF ITS MEMBERS FOR THE POSITION OF MAYOR OF ASMARA, WITH THE ULTIMATE CHOICE OF ONE OF THE THREE RESIDING WITH THE EPMG AUTHORITIES.

4. COMMENT: THE ELECTION PROCESS APPEARS TO BE VIEWED BY ASMARA RESIDENTS WITH A COMBINATION OF SKEPTICISM AND CONFUSION. THE LATTER IS COMPOUNDED BY THE ABSENCE OF ANY CENTRALIZED OFFICIAL SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON THE PROCESS, AND NO INSTRUCTIONS EITHER IN THE NEWSPAPERS OR ON THE RADIO. THE LACK OF CENTRAL DIRECTION OF THE PROGRAM LEADS OBSERVERS TO BELIEVE THAT THE ENTIRE PROCESS IS LARGELY COSMETIC AND WILL HAVE LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE POLITICAL OR SOCIAL IMPACT FOR THE CITY'S RESIDENTS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLICIES, ELECTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 27 NOV 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** BoyleJA  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976ASMARA00981  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Line Count:** 85  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION AF  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** BoyleJA  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 14 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <14 MAY 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <13 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ASMARA BEGINS KEBELE ELECTION PROCESS  
**TAGS:** PINT, ET, EPMG  
**To:** STATE ADDIS ABABA  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006